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PERSONNEL RESEARCH STAFF

PROGRESS REPORT

JUNE 1962 - JUNE 1963

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PERSONNEL RESEARCH STAFF
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Summary and Highlights

In terms of the program outlined in the Projected Work Plans, as revised November 5, 1962, the progress of the Personnel Research Staff to date may be summarized as follows:

1. Conferences with the Director of Personnel, other staff members of OP, and agency personnel officers occur on a continuing basis. Advisory services of the Staff have been utilized in connection with a variety of problems, including among others the man-in-job concept and its relationship to biographical and background data; feasibility of establishing a skills and knowledge testing program for Meat Inspectors; identification of ADP talent; rate of progression as related to college major; variations in performance as a function of geographical location; turnover among Engineers; the use of dexterity tests to select part-time workers in cotton grading centers; obtaining statistics on the use of minority groups in the Department; effectiveness of Department's recruiting efforts in colleges and universities; definition of acceptable level of competence for pay step increases; evaluation of progress in implementing PPRM recommendations; and long range planning.
2. a. Data from the Personnel Flow Questionnaire have been analyzed, and a report of the findings issued.
b. The three intra-agency career programs for which original commitments for implementation in MOHR during 1964 were made are FS General Foresters, ARS Plant Quarantine Inspectors, and SCS Conservationists. Subsequently, inter-agency career programming efforts have been initiated (with ADP Personnel, Accountants, and Personnel Officers).
c. Representatives of the Forest Service, Plant Quarantine Inspectors, and Soil Conservationists, in consultation with PRS, are proceeding according to schedule in preparing for the implementation of their MOHR programs by January 1964.
3. The Staff has continued to work closely with the MOHR Steering Committee and OMASD in specifying research problems related to career planning programs.
4. An experimental test battery for entering personnel has been developed, and provisions have been made for cooperative interagency test administration. One-day workshop training sessions in testing have been scheduled during the first two weeks in July at Washington, Chicago, Atlanta, Denver, and San Francisco. Administration of the experimental battery will begin shortly thereafter.

5. Research is underway to develop improved performance evaluation systems. Technical assistance is being provided in the collection and analysis of critical incidents illustrative of effective and ineffective job performance in several occupational areas including Foresters, Soil Conservationists, Plant Quarantine Inspectors, Data Processors, and Personnel Officers. Material now being received both from Washington and from the field will be used in the development of performance record forms. In addition, a statistical analysis of the GS-12 Forester promotion roster has been completed and a similar analysis of the Soil Conservationist promotion roster is being initiated.

6. In collaboration with the Employee Development Division, a methodology for evaluating management training programs has been developed, and a first report issued. The Kepner-Tregoe course in Management Problem Analysis and Decision Making was selected for a pilot study. A follow-up of participants in the pilot study and their supervisors is now getting underway. At the same time, advice and training in the application of the technique to other managerial training courses is being provided to a member of the Employee Development Division.

7. The proposed clearing house for information concerning agency personnel research projects has been established. To date, a number of reports and other information have been received. Several citations of relevant research literature have been made to appropriate agencies.

8. Liaison has been established and is being maintained with a number of other government agencies and private organizations. Among those with whom Staff members have discussed research of mutual interest are representatives of the Internal Revenue Service, the Veterans' Administration, the Army Personnel Research Office, the Civil Service Commission, the Personnel Laboratory at Lackland Air Force Base, and the General Motors Corporation.

9. The first series of personnel research colloquia for representatives from various agencies and offices has been completed.

10. Research projects not originally included in the Staff's Work Plans include a study of certain personnel concepts, and a follow-up study of approximately 100 Forest Service employees who took the Kuder Preference Record, an interest test, in 1949 and 1950. A report on the last named study has been completed.

Personnel Research Staff

The Personnel Research Staff came into existence in June 1962. It is with much pleasure derived from the interest and challenge of the work in which we have been engaged, and with great appreciation to the many fine people in USDA who have, by their interest and help, contributed so vitally to getting this program off on the right foot, that we submit this first anniversary report of progress.

The need for personnel research was signified by USDA employees who responded to an Office of Personnel questionnaire in 1961. Their replies indicated that doing work they considered worthwhile and making use of their skills and abilities were their two most important needs.

The Department responded by establishing a Personnel Research Staff in the Office of Personnel. In June of 1962, Dr. Albert S. Glickman, formerly Director of the Psychological Research Department of the U. S. Naval Personnel Research Activity, Washington, D. C., was appointed as Chief of this new organization. The Personnel Research Staff was rounded out by two psychologists who worked with Dr. Glickman at Navy, Dr. Francis L. Harmon (now Assistant Chief), and Dr. George W. Mayeske. Mrs. Dale J. Byers continues as the Staff secretary and Miss Loretta A. Gelenian now fills the Administrative Assistant position originally held by Mrs. Verna Deane Brown who is now in the Policies and Procedures Division.

The primary responsibility assigned to the new Staff was to "conduct a personnel research program in the Department with particular emphasis upon the implementation of MOHR (Management of Human Resources)." Specifically, the Staff would: (1) provide leadership and advice to Department agencies in the development of personnel research programs and plans adapted to their specific needs; (2) develop an overall Department research program, and (3) plan and initiate special research projects.

Orientation

The Department of Agriculture is a complex organization with wide and varied activities peculiar to its specific programs. Recognizing this, the Staff's first concern was to acquaint themselves with these activities and programs, visit and confer with agency officials, and acquire a "feeling for and understanding of" the Department. At the same time they "spread the word" concerning services available from the Personnel Research Staff and assistance which could be given to agencies. Through such interchange of information, it was felt that both operating personnel and researchers would gain, and the Department's personnel research program would receive the impetus needed for acceptance and success.

Orientation and contacts were not limited to the Department. In the first weeks of its existence, the Staff established liaison with a number of Government Departments (Internal Revenue Service, Veterans Administration, Army Personnel Research Office, and Civil Service Commission), and since then the liaison network has continually expanded to the point where it is not feasible to list here all of the contacts. This liaison has a two-fold purpose in that it offers a means of personally telling other departments about Agriculture's newly-established research program and, in addition, enables the Staff to discuss and learn about other departments' personnel research activities.

As a result of the contacts, conferences held, and general knowledge acquired during their orientation process, the Staff soon began to find themselves with an abundance of ideas and suggestions for research projects and programs. The file of ideas for future research continues to grow. Suggestions have come not only from agency officers and personnel people, but have also been the result of questions asked during meetings, colloquia, etc. All of these ideas offer a potential "nest-egg" for either present or future use in the area of personnel research.

The Staff prepared a projected Work Plan, approved by the Director of Personnel, in which specific research objectives were outlined and target dates established.

Personnel Research Colloquia

In accordance with work plans, a series of personnel research colloquia was initiated in order to acquaint the agencies with the role of PRS and to explore ways in which the Staff and operating personnel could function within the environment of automation and personnel research. From January through March, six bi-weekly sessions were held with a core of 13 personnel officials from 12 offices and agencies, supplemented occasionally by others having special interest in a given topic. The following topics were discussed;

What can MOHR measure?

How do we develop a Department-centered orientation?

The requirements for performance evaluation

Personnel surveys, their construction, use and techniques

Job satisfaction and morale

Personnel officer - 1968

Programmed instruction and its potentialities in USDA

Implementation of MOHR

Career Development. In order to begin the implementation of MOHR, it was necessary to first develop a model in terms of which this program could be conceptualized. Career Development was chosen as the model; this seemed most appropriate, since MOHR is essentially a rather sophisticated program of career development. This model, in fact, has proven to be extremely effective as a guide for identifying and depicting, in their proper sequence, steps to be taken in order to render MOHR operational. It has provided a means of representing separately, but in their relationship to each other, the various administrative and research procedures involved in the implementation process.

Using Career Development as a model, the Personnel Research Staff presented "Operation MOHR" to OP Division and Assistant Directors, agency personnel officers, and personnel staffs of SCS and ARS at a series of meetings.

Following these presentations, the task force for career planning composed of representatives from ARS, FS, SCS, FHA, and OP was redefined as the MOHR Steering Committee. The Committee was charged with the responsibility for advancing and coordinating proposals for policy and procedures to establish a Department-wide career program. Realizing that programming for MOHR would be a long-time process, the Committee first adopted definite principles and elements basic to a sound career program as a framework within which they could work. To assist the Committee in this area, PRS provided an outline of checkpoints to be considered. The need for meeting the requirements of MOHR has served as a partial basis for establishing priorities and developing the segments of a career program.

The PRS also assisted in the selection of trial occupational areas to be initially included in MOHR. Currently, these include: General Foresters, Conservationists, Plant Quarantine Inspectors, Personnel Officers and Technicians, Accountants and Auditors, and ADP Personnel. In each case a work group consisting of representatives of that occupation was established, and a member of the PRS attended the meetings of each group in an advisory capacity. These groups, assisted by members of the PRS are now engaged in mapping out career patterns and obtaining the necessary information regarding job requirements and qualifications. PRS has developed a working outline of the procedures to be followed. This series of projects is known as DISC (Decision Information Simulating Careers).

Skills Inventory. An important feature of the MOHR program will be the maintenance, on a current basis, of an inventory of all relevant skills of USDA employees. In appointing a committee to plan for the establishment of such an inventory, the Director of Personnel requested Dr. Mayeske to serve as a technical advisor. A major task of the committee is to decide what kinds of information should be initially

included in the skills inventory, and what should be made the object of research to determine its relevance for this purpose.

Research Projects

Personnel Flow. In planning for the implementation of MOHR, the need for information concerning existing career patterns in USDA quickly became apparent. Accordingly, PRS prepared for the MOHR Steering Committee a Personnel Flow Questionnaire that was submitted to Department agencies. The questionnaire requested a 10% sample of personnel actions which involved a permanent change in incumbency of a position by a permanent full-time employee in the GS series during FY 1962. No study of this type had previously been done in the Department. The findings from this survey were reported in the staff paper, "Personnel Flow in USDA"--the first of the Personnel Research Series, issued in January 1963. This information is helpful in showing "where people go to" who change positions and "where people come from" to fill positions in USDA. The report should serve as a benchmark for noting the effects of career programs that may subsequently be instituted.

Performance Information. A second project is directed at developing a system for obtaining and maintaining performance information that will have Departmentwide applicability. This approach involves determining the critical requirements of specified jobs. The procedure consists in collecting from workers and from their supervisors descriptions of "critical incidents"--that is, actually observed examples of effective and ineffective behavior on the job under consideration.

In March and again in April the PRS conducted two-day workshops to train representatives of the MOHR work groups and others in the theory and method of the critical incident technique. Most of the workshop participants are now collecting incidents in their respective occupational areas, both in Washington and in the field. Material is being received from Foresters, Soil Conservationists, Plant Quarantine Inspectors, Data Processors, and Personnel Officers. PRS is providing technical assistance in the analysis and classification of these incidents preparatory to the development of performance record forms which can be used for various purposes such as counseling, career planning, employee development, assessing training needs, improving supervisor skills, and documenting formal evaluations for personnel actions.

Several related research projects concerned with on-the-job performance appraisal are being undertaken. These projects involve the analysis of existing appraisal forms, in order to determine their statistical properties. Analysis has been completed of data obtained from the GS-12 Forester promotion roster, to determine the interrelationships among scores on various rating factors and the contribution

of each factor to the overall promotability ratings of employees. A similar analysis of the Soil Conservationist promotion roster is about to get underway. Such research may point the way to simplification of rating forms and other improvements in appraisal procedures.

Experimental Test Battery. A battery of tests to measure employees' general and specific aptitudes, interests, and motivations has been developed. Initial emphasis will be upon employees joining the Department at junior professional levels. Tests will be validated against employees' subsequent job performance.

Following the presentation of this project to agency administrators and other officials, members of the PRS held a series of meetings with the personnel officers of the various agencies to establish procedures for administering the tests, to find satisfactory testing sites, and to make provision for cooperative interagency test administration. One-day workshop training sessions in testing have been scheduled during the first two weeks in July at Washington, D. C., Chicago, Atlanta, Denver, and San Francisco. Administration of the experimental battery will begin shortly thereafter.

In cooperation with the Forest Service, PRS has recently completed a follow-up study of interest patterns of foresters. Scores on the Kuder Preference Record which was administered during 1948-50 to a group of junior foresters were analyzed in relation to two criteria: (1) "left FS" vs. "still in FS" in December 1962; and (2) rate of advancement. The results thus obtained suggest that when the Kuder is used, as planned, in connection with other tests in the experimental battery, improved predictions of success in various career fields may become possible. A report of this research has been completed under the title, "Prediction of Forester Retention and Advancement from the Kuder Preference Record," and will shortly be published in the Personnel Research Series.

Training Appraisal. The second report in the Personnel Research Series, "A Path to Management Development and to the Measurement of Its Growth," dated February 1963, describes a research project initiated at the request of the Employee Development Division. The object of this project was to develop a general methodology for evaluating management training programs. The Kepner-Tregoe training program in Management Problem Analysis and Decision Making was selected for trial evaluation. Through the analysis of questionnaires addressed to both participants and supervisors, PRS formulated general procedures for both increasing and assessing the effectiveness of such training programs in terms of applications in the work situation. A follow-up study to determine what long-range benefits, if any, resulted from the training is now about to begin. These findings will be presented in a second report.

A small research project involving interviews with USDA personnel who had participated in CSC management training courses was undertaken at the request of the Administrative Assistant Secretary and a memorandum was prepared regarding the evaluation of the program.

Communication. There is also in progress, at lower priority, a basic communications research project concerned with certain personnel concepts. The purpose of this study is to determine what these concepts mean to people engaged in personnel work. Analysis of the data will reveal dimensions of meaning underlying these personnel concepts.

Other Research Proposals

Incentives. An exploration of the effectiveness of the Department's incentive award program was begun. Two groups were to be included in the research project, one consisting of individuals who had received cash in the last five years, and a second group of those not having received such awards, but comparable in other respects. Lists of USDA employees who had received cash awards for outstanding or sustained superior service were obtained and award winners were classified according to agency, geographical location and GS level, and a sampling plan was formulated. Administrative decisions affecting the policy of granting awards made it inappropriate to develop the project further at this time.

Retirement Forecasting. A research proposal concerned with the development of a technique for forecasting yearly retirement losses over five-year periods has been submitted by PRS. This project would entail the construction of a mathematical model, followed by the collection and analysis of available data bearing upon retirement. When completed, the technique could become an integral part of the MOHR system.

Rotation. A research-based system of rotational assignment for developing senior executives in USDA is explored in another research proposal. If approved, this project would be carried out in three phases, involving the administration of an Executive Position Description form to a sample of supergrades, the identification of potential resource positions, and the development of a mathematical model and computer programming for implementation of the rotation system.

Consulting Services

Agencies of the Department quickly accepted PRS's availability for consultation.

ARS. The Agricultural Research Service conferred regarding analysis of the man-in-job concept and its relationship to biographical and background data. This will be pursued further with ARS after the inception of MODE. This agency also inquired as to the feasibility of establishing a skills and knowledge testing program for Meat Inspectors above grade GS-5.

SCS. The Soil Conservation Service has submitted data for an analysis of rate of progression in the Service as related to college major. SCS has also discussed with PRS the possibility of studying variation in performance evaluation as a function of geographical assignment.

FS. Members of the Staff are providing technical advice in the design of a research project directed at the problem of turnover among engineers in the Forest Service.

AMS. PRS has been consulted by the Agricultural Marketing Service in connection with two problems--the evaluation of training needs, and the possible use of dexterity tests to select temporary workers in the Cotton Division.

FES. Dr. Glickman recently advised with an FES subcommittee which was engaged in planning training for Cooperative Extension information staffs. Earlier in the year PRS provided advice regarding FES's program for developing and validating measures of county agent success. The chief problem was to select an appropriate statistical design for analyzing data gathered over a long period of time.

ASCS. A representative of ASCS sought advice on research to determine the relative influence of intelligence and reading skill as factors in the job performance of county office managers. Tests which might be used for this purpose were discussed, and a research design which would be suitable for the investigation was suggested by PRS. Possible sources of contamination in the results were also pointed out.

MOS. The Staff conferred with MOS regarding work in identifying ADP talent. The relative merits of different selection tests were reviewed in the light of available evidence, and a plan for further validation research was recommended.

Advice also has been given to various officials on matters of Department-wide concern.

Intergroup Relations. OP's Assistant to the Director for Intergroup Relations has been in frequent consultation regarding the possibility of incorporating minority group identification data in MODE to permit more effective analysis of the utilization of minority groups in the Department. The Personnel Research Staff was represented by Dr. Glickman on a visit to the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunities. Approval for implementation by USDA of the methods of data collection and analyses outlined by PRS has been received from the Vice President as Chairman of the President's Committee.

A small pilot study of Library employees is planned to test procedures developed by the Staff for the collection and control of data bearing upon race, religion, and national origin.

Training. The Employee Development Division plans to extend to other training programs the technique of evaluation developed by PRS and described in the Personnel Research Series report mentioned earlier. The Staff is collaborating in this effort by providing advice and training in the application of the method. Dr. Harmon also participated in

a panel discussion of the research report at a meeting of agency training officers.

Recruitment. Discussions have taken place with the Examination and Employment Division regarding their survey of the Department's recruitment efforts in colleges and universities. Several suggestions for analyzing the questionnaire returns were offered.

Summer Students. Within the Office of Personnel advice has been given as to possible ways of determining the reactions of summer students to employment in USDA.

Acceptable Level of Competence. As a member of an OP committee, Dr. Glickman assisted in defining acceptable levels of competence for pay step increases under the Federal Salary Reform Act of 1962.

PPRM Evaluation. Members of the Staff served in an advisory capacity to the PPRM Evaluation Committee and helped to develop a follow-up survey design for evaluating progress in implementing the recommendations of the PPRM meeting.

Joint Committee of the Land Grant Universities and USDA. The problem of attracting high-caliber graduates to the Department was tackled at the November 1962 Joint Committee of the Land Grant Universities and the USDA on Training for Government Service, where Dr. Glickman sought to develop means of encouraging participation of graduate school students in research projects of interest to them and to the Department.

Long Range Planning. As the PRS became more familiar with the workings of USDA and more involved in the research and consulting activities already noted, it became increasingly manifest that in these times of ever accelerating change, vital to the development of well founded and well organized research and, indeed, to the whole personnel management effort that research is meant to serve, was the requirement for clear specification of long range goals. This point of view was promptly endorsed and implemented by the Director of Personnel. During the past few months members of the PRS have participated actively in the long range planning conferences in the Office of Personnel. Dr. Glickman has been a member of the steering committee, and other members of the Staff have served on conference task forces.

Non-USDA Advisory Contacts. On several occasions PRS has extended its consultation services to organizations outside USDA. Information was given to AID on ways to determine training needs of overseas administrative personnel, and to representatives of the Bureau of Public Roads on techniques of performance appraisal. A recent discussion with a member of the Stanford Research Institute covered uses of mathematical models in job rotation and retirement planning. In April the Staff was visited by officers of the USAF who were preparing a paper on applications of ADP to personnel management. Various MOHR research projects were described

as background material for this paper. Several staff papers and other materials were also given to representatives of the Canadian Department of Agriculture.

Field Trips and Meetings

A number of field trips have been made by Staff members in the past year in order to gain first-hand knowledge about research problems and to present information on the Staff's research activities to other agencies.

In September, Dr. Harmon attended the annual convention of the American Psychological Association in St. Louis. In conjunction with the experimental evaluation of management development courses, he also went to Atlanta to observe the administration of the Kepner-Tregoe course. There he administered pretraining questionnaires to participants. In April he attended a one-day seminar on "Communications Research and Its Implications for Training Personnel," given in the Washington area.

In October, Dr. Glickman visited the National Agricultural Extension Center for Advanced Study, University of Wisconsin at Madison, Wisconsin; the Soil Conservation Service Center at Coshocton, Ohio; and the General Motors Corporation in Detroit. The trip presented an opportunity to discuss at Madison the monograph "Personnel Appraisal in the Cooperative Extension Service," to explore cooperation with the University's Center in graduate research projects, and to provide students with an orientation to MOHR. At Coshocton, Dr. Glickman discussed with SCS students problems in employee motivation, performance standards, appraisal, and employee mobility, and provided them with background on MOHR. In Detroit, a follow-up was made of Chevrolet Engineering Performance and Development Record and other GM experience in performance appraisal and personnel applications of ADP.

Also during October, Dr. Mayeske visited the Army Personnel Research Office in Washington as well as the Air Force Personnel Research Laboratory in San Antonio, Texas to review computer applications in personnel management. Later in the month he and Dr. Glickman accompanied Soil Conservation Service personnel to view conservation and watershed projects in La Plata, Maryland.

In May, Dr. Glickman travelled to Columbia, Missouri to participate in the Federal Extension Service's Performance Appraisal Seminar. Also in May, he presented the paper "Is Performance Appraisal Practical?" and introduced the critical incident technique at the AMS Eastern Regional IMPACT program in Clemson, South Carolina. In June he gave a repeat performance at the AMS Central Area Administration Division IMPACT program in Chicago.

In March the Staff visited the Washington laboratory of the Post Office Department's Office of Research and Engineering. The use of automation in handling mail was demonstrated, together with several experimental projects in human engineering. Although not directly concerned with personnel work as such, the presentation--dealing as it did with the replacement of men by machines--seemed to carry important implications for the personnel manager of the future.

Staff members have attended various meetings and conferences in the Washington area. These included a two-day conference in March on "The Peace Corps and the Behavioral Sciences," sponsored jointly by the Peace Corps and the National Institute of Mental Health, several sessions of the regional meeting of the Public Personnel Association in April, and the convention of the Society of Personnel Administrators in May.

In the Washington area also, members of the Personnel Research Staff have participated in panel discussions. In January, Dr. Glickman spoke at a meeting of the Society for Personnel Administration on testing research in USDA, as part of a panel discussion on Federal Recruitment and Selection. That month he also led a session of the 12th Management Development Program, USDA Graduate School, entitled "Some Psychological Observations on Personnel Management Research," and outlined ideas on psychological principles and resulting management development policies which he had worked on or observed in research work.

In January, with Director Carl Barnes, Dr. Glickman took part in a panel discussion held by the Committee on Research of the American Society for Public Administration and discussed personnel research work in the Department.

In June Dr. Glickman was one of the speakers discussing the topic "What does getting the most out of life mean to you?" at the FES staff meeting sponsored by the Epsilon Sigma Phi Fraternity.

On June 27 and 28, the PRS under the leadership of Dr. Mayeske sponsored a two-day seminar on "Computer Applications to Personnel Research," conducted by Dr. Joseph H. Ward, Jr., of the Personnel Research Laboratory, Lackland Air Force Base. The seminar was attended by a number of psychologists from the Washington area.

Miscellaneous

A continuing task of the Staff has been to assemble and catalog a library of information relevant to personnel research. In addition to this collection of publications and bibliographies, ADP programs for personnel research, agency rating forms and tests and questionnaires of different types are being collected.

Early in the year, agency personnel officers responded to a request that PRS be kept informed about personnel research done in their agencies. In addition, publications have been received from other Federal agencies.

PRS ReportsGlickman

Personnel Flow in USDA, PRS Report 1

Harmon

A Path to Management Development and to a Measurement of Its Growth, PRS Report 2

Mayeske

Prediction of Forester Retention and Advancement from the Kuder Preference Record, PRS Report 3

PapersGlickman

Career Planning and Performance Review

Reactions to Warren B. Irons^o Letter (re CSC Management Training Courses)--for Administrative Assistant Secretary

Training Evaluation--A Case Approach (Training Officers^o Seminar)

Some Thoughts on the Role of Incentives

The Place of Personnel Research in USDA

An Approach to Development of a More "Department-Centered" Orientation

A Method for Merchandizing Management Research: The USDA Personnel Research Colloquium

Leadership and Motivation: Art and Science (accepted for publication by Personnel Administration)

Is Performance Appraisal Practical? (accepted for publication by Personnel Administration)

A System of Rotational Assignment to Develop Senior Executive Resources in the Department of Agriculture--A proposal

Harmon

Steps Required to Develop a Career Program (for the MOHR Steering Committee)

